

Ladysmith Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113080
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311097
Inspection dates	29-30 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-7 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Walker
Headteacher	Helen Thomson
Date of previous school inspection	November 2004
School address	Ladysmith Road Exeter EX1 2PS
Telephone number	01392 271596
Fax number	01392 494714

Age group	3-7 years
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than the average infant school. Over recent years, its population has become increasingly diverse and although the majority of pupils are White British, 10 other ethnic backgrounds are now represented. There is an increasing proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2005, the school changed from being a first school to an infant school, reducing its roll by 200 pupils. This resulted in staff redeployments and redundancies. Since then, a declining population has caused a falling roll, requiring further staffing changes and creating pressure on the school budget.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ladysmith Infants is an outstanding yet still improving school that has rightly gained the overwhelming confidence of parents and the enthusiastic approval of the pupils who say, 'It is fun and fantastic.' A 'can-do' culture ensures pupils believe in themselves and expect to live up to the high expectations held of them by staff. Progress is rapid and pupils achieve outstandingly well. Nursery and reception age children gain skills and knowledge that mean many will gain the nationally expected goals by the time they complete the Reception Year. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in reading, and above average in writing and mathematics. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make equally good progress.

A key factor in promoting learning is the combination of an outstanding curriculum and the consistency of the teaching. Importance is placed on the development of basic skills. For example, a short period twice each day is devoted to the successful development of phonic knowledge. This approach is balanced by a creative and exciting programme of work that often links learning in one subject to another. Pupils make pizzas before writing recipes or practise problem solving skills when working in the school's nature trail. They understand the relevance of what they are learning, are excited by what they do and so are keen to learn.

Pupils' personal development is strong. They are confident, friendly and try hard to please. They become increasingly independent. Their willingness to be responsible is evident in the way they contribute to the school community through everyday tasks and through activities such as the school council. Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and generally considerate of each other. Playtimes are greatly enhanced by a very wide range of activities from which the pupils can choose, which actively promotes their good behaviour. High quality care is provided from a time before the pupils join the school. There is high priority placed on ensuring that pupils are safe and secure, with excellent procedures underpinning this. Good assessment information ensures targets are challenging and work is well matched to the needs of pupils. Pupils are not yet, however, as aware of how they could improve their work as they might be.

Teaching and learning are of a consistently good quality and there are important elements of outstanding practice. High quality practical activities promote learning, and high expectations based on skilled assessment mean pupils are challenged at an individual level. The excellent skills of teaching assistants are used very well to provide more personalised support for pupils. Specialist skills of staff are utilised well to extend opportunities, for example, higher-level teaching assistants provide outstanding quality teaching in food technology and in leading the work done in the school's nature trail. Teaching and learning are greatly enhanced by the resources available to staff. Specialist rooms for art, music and design technology raise the profile of these subjects and support the progress pupils make. Pupils' work in these subjects and in information and communication technology is of the highest quality.

There is outstanding and visionary leadership and management by the headteacher, governors and subject leaders. This successfully seeks to give pupils high quality experiences and to foster confident learners. High quality self-evaluation drives the school forward. Improvement work is undertaken energetically and is very successful. Inclusion is of paramount importance to the school's leaders and action to

ensure it is very effective. Parental approval is summed up by a parent who wrote, 'At Ladysmith Infants every child really matters.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

As demonstrated by the Effective Early Learning status held by the school, children are very well taught and are supported by a strong and highly trained team of teachers, teaching assistants and parental helpers. Children are given a curriculum that very effectively meets the needs of all in a safe and secure environment, incorporating indoor and outdoor spaces. Regular assessments are built into planning and the knowledge gained from these informs the next steps of learning for each child. Particular needs are quickly identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity. Progress in gaining early skills is rapid and the emphasis on the development of language and social skills is particularly effective. The provision is dynamically led and there is a clear vision of how it will develop in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend pupils' knowledge of how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children enter school in the Nursery with levels of skills below those expected for their age particularly in their speech and language skills. Standards are rising throughout the school with each year group showing higher standards than the year before. In 2007, Year 2 pupils attained significantly above average standards overall. Current Year 2 pupils are attaining higher standards than those attained in 2007 and standards for current Year 1 pupils look set to be even higher. Achievement is outstanding because of the increased focus on fitting teaching and learning to each individual's needs. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those of higher attainment achieve as well as their peers. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good gains in developing their ability to use English effectively. The breadth of high quality work seen in subjects beyond English and mathematics is a particular strength of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love school and all that it provides. The school has Healthy School status and work in this aspect ensures pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. Many take action to do this, for example, through engaging in activities at playtime. Their personal development is outstanding. Pupils gain spiritual and social understanding as well as life skills through activities like those in the school's nature trail that allow them to work on cooperative tasks such as the building of a tunnel. The combination of pupils' excitement about learning and the development of basic skills prepares them well for their future economic well-being. The emphasis on inclusion ensures pupils have good multicultural understanding and work and play together amicably. Good behaviour is evident overall. Some boisterous behaviour is occasionally seen, but adults easily control this. Good attendance is actively and successfully promoted.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The consistency of teaching and learning is a major strength. Tight structures are in place to ensure pupils are systematically taught the skills they need to make outstanding progress. Teachers motivate pupils and inspire effort by planning creative practical activities. Pupils are very well managed in class and there is an atmosphere of industry. Even the youngest children are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, quickly learning how to work without an adult. Assessment has been the focus of recent development work. This now enables teachers to know their pupils very well and to, in the words of a parent, 'teach the children as one class but at each child's level'. Parents are given the information they need to help them support their child at home and a very high number help in school. This gives parents further insight and provides valued extra support for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is innovative and at the heart of the school's drive to promote progress and personal development. Alongside the daily routine of the teaching of basic skills, pupils are given the highest quality creative, spiritual and cultural experiences, raising self-esteem, self-reliance and social interaction. The curriculum extends beyond the classroom. Playtime activities give pupils opportunity to practise many of the skills they have been taught, for instance extending language through imaginative play. Curricular provision to ensure that pupils are active and healthy is threaded through the day, with physical activity providing a balance to more sedentary activities, successfully promoting good health. Staff make the most of opportunities to practise skills taught in one subject in others. Drumming, for example, is used to promote speaking and listening and an understanding of pattern and sequence in mathematics. The school makes very good use of the range of ethnic backgrounds represented in its population to promote cultural understanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Very strong procedures are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and confident in seeking advice from adults. There are very tight procedures to ensure that pupils are properly safeguarded. The work of the parent support worker, together with provision such as the toddler group, ensures smooth entry to school and continuing personal support. The school enjoys very close relationships with outside agencies, some of which have their base at the school. This ensures that pupils experiencing difficulties are very well supported. Provision to help parents with English as an additional language to support their children's education is particularly effective. Academic guidance is good. Assessment information is used to provide as personalised an education as possible. Pupils are very aware of what they are learning and become increasingly sure of what is expected. However, although the school has begun to help pupils understand how to improve their work, there is inconsistency between teachers, which means not all pupils are sure how to do this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership by the headteacher, very effectively supported by senior leaders, has enabled the school to move through a difficult period of reorganisation with associated budgetary and staffing issues, with no detrimental effect on pupils. Thorough monitoring identifies areas of provision that need strengthening. Improvement work is very successful, which can be seen in raised standards in reading and writing resulting from the move to twice-daily teaching of these skills. There is excellent support, dedication and commitment from extremely talented governors. This has played a very significant role in helping the school maintain stability over recent years. Governors continue to fully understand the school's strengths and the challenges in its future. The management of the budget has been exemplary, ensuring high quality resources despite the considerable pressure caused by the reduction in pupil numbers. The school enjoys a deservedly high reputation locally and gives a great deal to the local community through wide-ranging extended services and its work with other agencies. The combination of these factors means that there is outstanding capacity to maintain and improve the quality of education provided.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



1 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ladysmith Infant School, Exeter, EX1 2PS

We really enjoyed our visit to your school and would like to thank you for the friendly way that you talked to us. We think your school is an exceptional one and that you are very lucky to go there.

- You are making really good progress in learning to read, write and do maths.
- Your headteacher, teachers, teaching assistants and governors need a big pat on the back for all the work they do for you.
- You are growing up to be independent, confident young people who are interesting to talk to.
- The work we saw in art, DT, music and ICT was of high quality.
- Teachers plan interesting and exciting activities that make you want to learn.
- Fun activities indoors and outside give you lots of opportunities to practise what you have learned.
- The adults in the school take very good care of you.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to do one thing to make your school even better.

- Help each of you to know how you can improve your work.

We are very glad that you like your school. We know you will continue to help your teachers to keep the school as good as it is by working and playing hard.

Best wishes

Rowena Onions
Lead inspector